

Is the Church of Christ a Denomination?

Text: Matthew 16:13-19

Introduction:

1. Today, denominationalism is all that many people know.
2. If transported back to the first century, most would be shocked to find that there was only one church.
3. Religious division was well known to the Jews in the sects of the Pharisees (Act 15:5) and Sadducees (Acts 5:17).
4. Some even accused the Lord's church of being another Jewish sect (Acts 24:5; 28:22; cf. Acts 24:14-15).
5. Is the church of Christ a denomination?

I. DEFINITIONS

A. What is the church?

1. The Greek word translated as "church" is *ekklesia* and it means, "called out."
2. It refers to those who are called by the Gospel out of the world (2 Thessalonians 2:14).
3. Coming out of the world, one is added to the church or kingdom of Jesus (Acts 2:39, 47; Colossians 1:13).
4. Note that the word "church" does not refer to a building.

B. What is the church of Christ?

1. It is the worldwide collective of all those who have obeyed the Gospel and have been saved from sin (Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:10, 21).
2. It is the local assembly of disciples in a specific location (1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; cf. Romans 16:16).

C. What is a denomination?

1. In the Bible, the word "sect" refers to "a body of men separating themselves from others and following their own tenets" (Thayer).
2. A denomination is "a religious organization uniting in a single legal and administrative body a number of local congregations" (Webster).
3. Denominationalism is defined as "devotion to denominational principles or interests" (Webster).

D. There is no denomination approved by Scripture.

1. A denomination is larger than the local church.
2. A denomination is smaller than the worldwide church.
3. It has no authority to exist.

II. DECLARATIONS

- A. The church is God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:10-11).
- B. The church was divinely planned:
 - 1. Beginning in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-4)
 - 2. In the last days (Joel 2:28ff; Acts 2:16-21)
 - 3. In the days of the Roman Empire (Daniel 2:44)
 - 4. Built by Jesus (2 Samuel 7:12-17; Matthew 16:18)
- C. The denominations do not fit this plan:
 - 1. The Catholic Church was founded in Rome in AD 606.
 - 2. The Lutheran Church started in Germany in 1517.
 - 3. The Presbyterian Church began in Switzerland in AD 1560.
 - 4. The Baptist Church started in Holland in AD 1608.
 - 5. The Methodist Church began in England in 1740.
 - 6. The Jehovah's Witnesses were founded in America in 1872.
 - 7. The Christian Church started in 1906, and the Disciples of Christ split from them in 1959.
- D. The church of Christ is not a denomination.

III. DISTINCTIONS

- A. Jesus is the only Head (Ephesians 1:22-23).
- B. The New Testament is the only doctrine (Acts 2:42).
- C. Names are authorized and possessive (Romans 16:16).
- D. Worship is in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).
- E. The Gospel is the only message (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
- F. Organization is only congregational (1 Timothy 3)
- G. Unity is undenominational (John 17).

Conclusion: *The church of Christ is not a denomination!*